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ABSTRACT

The paper addresses variations in the occupational and educational expectations of high school seniors from two geographic regions of the U.S. It gives particular emphasis to differences in the proportions with high expectations, to the relationships between those proportions and certain personal-social characteristics of the respondents, to respondents' perception of source of influence on occupational and educational decisions, and to respondents' perception of the attitude of their parents toward those decisions. The basic premise of the paper is that factors associated with geographic residency affect the behaviors and perceptions of residents. The contention is that geographic climatic and terrain imperatives, normative patterns associated with ethnic composition of the population, expectation and perceptual sets developing from occupational and religious characteristics, traditions based on differing historical precedents, and similar factors will be reflected in actual behaviors as well as in attitudinal patterns. The 1970 North Carolina sample consisted of somewhat more than 3,000 respondents; that from North Dakota (1973) was a little more than one-third as large. Comparison of the total sample from each State shows that the proportion of the North Dakota sample with high educational and vocational expectation was slightly higher than in North Carolina. The difference was somewhat greater for vocational expectation, but in each case was sufficiently small that one need not attach much meaning to it. Thus, the differences tend to support the contention regarding influence of socially derived consequences of geographic location. (KM)

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OCCUPATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS OF NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN YOUTH: A PRELIMINARY COMPARISON*

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OCCUPATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL EXPECTATIONS OF NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN YOUTH: A PRELIMINARY COMPARISON

This paper is addressed to variations in the occupational and educational expectations of high school seniors from two geographic regions of the United States. It gives particular emphasis to differences in the proportions with high expectations, to the relationships between those proportions and certain personal-social characteristics of the respondents, to respondent perception of sources of influence upon occupational and educational decisions, and to respondent perception of the attitude of their parents toward those decisions.

With a bow to Howard Odum, the basic premise of the paper is that factors associated with geographic residency are effective of the behaviors and perceptions of residents. It is contended that geographic climatic and terrain imperatives, normative patterns associated with ethnic composition of the population, expectational and perceptual sets developing from occupational and religious characteristics, traditions based in differing historical precedents, and similar factors will be reflected in actual behaviors as well as in attitudinal patterns. The paper attempts to investigate this broadly stated working hypothesis through the medium of student reaction to questions regarding occupational and educational expectations, utilizing a null hypotheses of no difference in distribution of response.

The North Carolina sample consisted of somewhat more than 3000 respondents; that from North Dakota was little more than a third as large. Each sample was selected in a structured-random model designed to take into account geographic representation within the state, variant size of school, and representation of the ethnic and racial stocks present. The first two objectives were adequately met while the third, in North Dakota, was not. Very few Indian students were found in the public schools. Access to the schools in which Indian students were found turned out to be almost impossible. As a consequence, the North Dakota sample consists almost entirely of white students. That from North Carolina contains many non-whites.

Data were collected in the late spring, in 1970 in North Carolina and 1973 in North Dakota. It is recognized that this time lag could contribute to differences in response obtained. Respondents consisted of the senior students present on the day of a scheduled interview, responding to a questionnaire administered in most cases in the classroom, and in a group context.

The data are presented as composite tables comparing percentages of respondents from each sample expressing high expectations, and classified by an indicator variable. Within each of the tables dealing with extent of occupational and educational expectation (numbers 1-10), data for each state are given, together with a comparison of state data, in the form of percentages of high expectation, chi-square values, and probability levels. For those data dealing with respondent perceptions of influence upon their decisions, and of their parents' attitudes, the data are presented as percentages only, and use a truncated residential variable as a constant for comparison. Data for village respondents are not given, but in most cases would correspond quite closely to those for town residents. In all instances, country residence is defined as those students from farms and from RNF homes. Village is defined as an urban setting of up to 2000 persons in North Dakota and up to 2500 in North Carolina. It is felt that the greater social and economic function played by the smaller entity in North Dakota justified this distinction. Probably it did not greatly affect the analysis. The previously discussed lack of nonwhites in the North Dakota sample precluded racial comparisons in this analysis.

The Findings

Sex distinguished the vocational expectations of the respondents in each instance, in the anticipated direction, but whereas males in North Carolina anticipated high prestige occupations in significantly greater numbers than did females the difference in the North Dakota sample was minimal and non-significant. The chi-square test for independent samples showed a significant difference between the two.

Residence was associated with vocational expectation in the anticipated direction in each sample. Increasing urbanization of residence was associated with a greater proportion of respondent expectation of high prestige employment. In each state, the differences were significant. Differences in the two samples likewise were significant. Examination of the percentages with high expectation reveals that country residents in North Dakota had a considerably higher expectation proportion than their North Carolina counterparts. This finding probably derives from two factors: (1) consistently high expectations in the North Dakota sample, and (2) perception on the part of North Dakota country residents of movement into a prestigious large-scale farming enterprise, as opposed to the perception of many North Carolina country respondents of movement into middle-prestige industrial and manufacturing occupations. It will be noted that the proportions of the North Dakota town sample with high vocational expectations also exceeded that from North Carolina, a condition not existing among village residents. Our previous North Carolina data likewise had found village residents optomistic.

High socio-economic status, as determined by the prestige of the father's occupation, correlated with higher proportions of prestigious occupational expectation. Differences within each state were significant, as were the differences between the states. The disparity of expectation was not as great in North Dakota as in North Carolina.

Delay in anticipated time until marriage was accompanied by increasing proportions with high vocational expectation in each state, with in-state differences significant while those between states were not. High expectations were held by almost twice as many students intending to delay marriage as by those anticipating it would occur within three years.

Respondents who planned to migrate from the current place of residence had significantly greater proportions with high vocational expectation than did those who planned to remain, in both states. The disparity was greater in North Carolina and the differences between the state samples were significant.

Comparison of educational expectation, in which high expectation was defined as those able to name the college of attendance in the fall, revealed a correlation with sex of respondent. In North Carolina, males significantly exceeded females. In North Dakota, females exceeded males, but not significantly. The differences between the states were not significant.

Urban character of residence was associated with increased expectation of higher education, significantly in each state, but with lesser disparity in North Dakota. State differences were significant, largely as a result of different expectational levels of country residents.

More students of high socio-economic status planned to go to college in each state, with the difference significant in each instance as well as for the difference between states. The disparity between high and low status students in North Carolina was greater, basically due to greater expectation in the North Carolina high status sample element.

Early marriage intention suppressed educational expectation in each state, significantly. Somewhat more of the early marriage element in North Dakota than in North Carolina had college plans, but considerably less of the late marriage element expressed this belief. As a consequence, the differences between the states tended to balance out and were non-significant.

Migration intention was associated with higher educational expectation, significantly so, for students in each state. The disparity in expectation between those planning to migrate and those who did not was considerably greater in North Carolina, and the differences between the two samples were significant.

We now direct our attention to tables 11-14, dealing with respondent perception of influences impinging upon their occupational and educational decisions. North Carolina students perceived their mother as the dominant influence upon the vocational decision, with the father subordinate to both teachers and peer-group friends. In North Dakota students perceived both parents as more influential than any other source and accorded the father somewhat more effect than did North Carolinians. This finding seems consistent with anthropologically-derived theory according the father influence upon occupational training in non-industrial societies, a conclusion somewhat impaired by the equal influence attributed to the father by both country and town sample components. The relative lack of influence of siblings is indicated in each state, a finding somewhat more difficult to understand in North Dakota given the large families typical there and the degree of isolation which prevails. The greater influence of a non-peer, non-relative in North Dakota is the other major finding re influence on vocational decision.

Large proportions of both the North Carolina and North Dakota samples perceived both their fathers and their mothers as in agreement with their vocational decision. Differences in response in the two states were minor. Opposition to the decision was perceived as practically nonexistent, but was expressed by slightly greater proportions of students concerning their fathers.

Perception of the influence of prior educational experience upon the vocational decision varied greatly between the two samples. Whereas approximately half of the North Carolina sample considered education to have had great influence, less than 15 percent of students in North Dakota expressed this belief. In support of this difference, approximately half of the North Dakota sample considered prior education to have had little of no effect on their decision. Reference to the proportions of students assigning influence to a teacher corroborates the contentions regarding educational influence.

Disparity in perception of the source of influence continued to be expressed with regard to the respondent's educational decision. While the mother was considered to have been most influential by more respondents than had expressed this view regarding vocational decision influence, in each state, almost twice as many North Carolina students said so than did those from North Dakota. The father continued to be a major factor in the educational decision, but ran a poor second to the mother and for country students in North Dakota was superseded by a friend. Teachers, for reasons difficult to comprehend, generally were not considered to exert as much influence upon the educational decision as upon the occupational decision. Other, undefined, persons continued to exert more influence in the North Dakota sample, and the influence of peer group friends was greater for that sample as well.

Mothers were overwhelmingly perceived to be in agreement with the educational decision, but there was some tendency to consider the mother as only accepting or even opposing the decision. By limited amounts, North Dakota students were less prone to consider their mother to be in agreement and

somewhat more prone to believe her to be in opposition, particularly among town residents. Fathers were perceived as basically in agreement with the educational decision, with North Dakota country respondents somewhat more apt than their North Carolina counterparts to perceive agreement and less prone to perceive opposition. To the contrary, North Carolina town residents in greater degree perceived their fathers as in agreement and were less apt to perceive opposition than were their North Dakota counterparts. This condition resulted in some variance within as well as between the state samples, although the basic condition was one of perceived agreement.

The influence of prior education upon the educational decision was considered great by more than half of the North Carolina sample, in contrast to less than 15 percent of the North Dakota sample. At the other end of the scale, about twice as many North Dakotans considered prior education to have had no influence upon their educational decision than was true of North Carolinians. When the category of "little" effect is added to that of "none", half of the North Dakota sample considered education essentially unrelated to their college decision.

Comment

Examination of response to questions regarding vocation and education reveals some interesting comparisons to which only passing comment may be made here. Educational expectation was less influenced by the sex of the respondent than was vocational expectation, certainly a comment upon the perceptions of the occupational structure and social norms held by these respondents. Proportions of students with high vocational expectations clearly exceeded those holding high educational expectations, as optimally shown in the tables relating to residence, raising compelling questions regarding the relationships believed to exist between education and occupation, as well as the more general question of the bases of educational worth; a spector is raised regarding the apparent divergence of opinion between teachers and substantial components of the business world on the one hand and students on the other. Attention is drawn to the clarity with which SES distinguishes the educational expectation of respondents, specifically in terms of the limited proportions of low SES students with high educational expectation, and, conversely, the apparent boost given vocational expectation by high SES membership. The depressing effect of early marriage upon educational expectation stands in sharp contrast to the depressent exertion upon vocational expectation. One cannot avoid speculation regarding the extent of potential disappointment inherent in these figures, particularly in view of the fact that the occupation upon which expectation levels were based was that anticipated at the conclusion of the formal educational process. Perhaps the definition of anticipatory goal deflection needs a corollarly referent for the unanticipated and consequent component. The greater, for North Carolina students much greater, influence of the mother upon the educational than upon the vocational decision is compelling and the previously noted lesser influence of the teacher upon the educational decision is mystifying and in a sense appalling. The tendency to perceive parents as in agreement with educational and vocational decision should reassure those who function best in a "harmony" model, just as it will provide grist for the mill of those who consider the independence of youth to have reached a stage where it manipulates the attitudes of those adults with which it comes into contact. One cannot even attempt to explain that more opposition is perceived for the educational decision than for the vocational one, without regard to which parental attitude is being noted,

in the absence of knowledge of the directionality of the decision. Nonetheless, it seems a pertinent question worthy of additional investigation.

Conclusions

It seems clear that the North Dakota respondents represent a different sample than do the North Carolina respondents. The assumption is made that the difference is a consequence of variant geographic location and its attendant variations in traditions, norms, expectation - and, perhaps, provision and quality of facilities - rather than constituting a function of the time lag between data collection.

Comparision of the total sample from each state, without regard for differences associated with indicator variables, shows that the proportion of the North Dakota sample with high educational and vocational expectation was slightly higher than in the North Carolina sample. The difference was somewhat greater for vocational expectation, but in each case it was sufficiently small that one need not attach much meaning to it. Thus, the differences, statistically significant for all but marriage intent, which appeared with application of the indicator variables, tend to support the contention regarding influence of socially derived consequences of geographic location.

It was noted in presentation of the findings that the variation in proportion with high expectation tended to be less in the North Dakota sample for many indicators, leading to a tentative conclusion of greater equality as a characteristic of the North Dakota sample. This feature is particularly notable with regard to the variance in expectation between the sexes. (Obviously, this conclusion may properly be a consequence of the homogeneity of the North Dakota sample to which attention already has been called.) I find it of interest that the variable of marriage intent is the only one which did not distinguish expectation, not only because of the vested interest I have in the operation of this variable, but because it is one of the few which represents a function on the part of the individual rather than a socially determined status. In this sense, the finding credits the basic premise.

While this primitive, provisional and preliminary investigation is in no way conclusive, it is sufficiently stimulating to encourage additional and more stringent research into geographic relationships to youthful expectation. This comparison arose from fortuitous and unplanned events. It is hoped that efforts will be made deliberately to engage in cross-regional research into expectation. As a further stimulant, incomplete investigation of these data, not ready for inclusion in this paper, seems to indicate very little anticipatory vocational goal deflection in the North Dakota sample, in sharp contrast to the North Carolina sample and to most other reported research.

I will conclude with a thought directed specifically to educators, but which has a more inclusive relevance. It appears that students do not perceive education, relevant to its "reality" function in the occupational sphere, to have the importance typically assigned to it by educators. To the extent that there is such a relevance, and a subsequent consequence for participation in the vocational structure, educators would be well advised to re-evaluate their programs to bring student perception into greater consistency with reality.

Table 1. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Percent of Respondents With High Vocational Expectation, By Sex

State	Sex: Male	Sex: Female	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
North Carolina	61.3 (1115)*	43.4 (1209)	73.89	.001
North Dakota	56.8 (472)	56.1 (535)	0.05	NS
Comparison, by sex, North Carolina and North Dakota, high vocational expectation			16.44	.001

*In each case, the total number of respondences in the category

Table 2. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Percent of Respondents With High Vocational Expectation, by Residence

State	Residence: Country	Residence: Village	Residence: Town	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
North Carolina	41.9 (959)	58.4 (207)	58.5 (1138)	61.19	.001
North Dakota	49.5 (323)	54.7 (161)	62.5 (507)	14.02	.001
Comparison by residence, North Carolina and North Dakota, high vocational expectation				12.97	.01

Table 3. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Percent of Respondents With High Vocational Expectation, by SES

State	SES: High	SES: Low	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
North Carolina	73.4 (617)	43.4 (1460)	157.17	.001
North Dakota	64.7 (510)	48.9 (419)	23.45	.001
Comparison, by SES, North Carolina and North Dakota, high vocational expectation			57.48	.001

Table 4. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Percent of Respondents With High Vocational Expectation, By Marriage Intent

State	Marriage Intent: Early	Marriage Intent: Intermediate	Marriage Intent: Late	Chi-Square Value	Probability Level
North Carolina	31.7 (867)	64.4 (675)	66.8 (579)	235.68	.001
North Dakota	37.8 (270)	62.9 (350)	63.3 (305)	49.50	.001
Comparison, by Marriage Intent, North Carolina and North Dakota, high vocational expectation				5.43	NS

Table 5. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Percent of Respondents With High Vocational Expectation, By Migration Intent

	Migration Intent: Yes	Migration Intent: No	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
North Carolina	57.1 (1785)	37.2 (892)	94.45	.001
North Dakota	59.6 (557)	48.6 (389)	11.25	.001
Comparison, by migration intent, North Carolina and North Dakota, high vocational expectation			25.64	.001

Table 6. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Percent of Respondents With High Educational Expectation, By Sex

State	Sex: Male	Sex: Female	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
North Carolina	40.5 (1267)	30.7 (1326)	27.16	.001
North Dakota	36.6 (543)	38.3 (603)	0.34	NS
Comparison, by Sex, North Carolina and North Dakota, high educational expectation			10.57	.01

Table 7. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Percent of Respondents With High Educational Expectation, by Residence

State	Residence: Country	Residence: Village	Residence: Town	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
North Carolina	25.5 (1058)	41.4 (232)	42.5 (1303)	77.57	.001
North Dakota	32.3 (350)	37.0 (173)	41.3 (603)	7.70	.05
Comparison, by residence, North Carolina and North Dakota, high educational expectation				6.12	.05

Table 8. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Percent of Respondents With High Educational Expectation, By SES

State	SES: High	SES: Low	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
North Carolina	54.6 (674)	28.5 (1595)	140.07	.001
North Dakota	45.9 (573)	29.1 (482)	31.49	.001
Comparison, by SES, North Carolina and North Dakota, High Educational Expectation			45.71	.001

Table 9. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Percent of Respondents With High Educational Expectation, By Marriage Intent

State	Marriage Intent: Early	Marriage Intent: Intermediate	Marriage Intent: Late	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
North Carolina	16.6 (952)	47.9 (744)	52.4 (659)	281.86	.001
North Dakota	19.6 (301)	43.3 (393)	46.2 (357)	58.29	.001
Comparison, by marriage intent, North Carolina and North Dakota, high educational expectation				2.20	NS

Table 10. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Percent of Respondents with High Educational Expectation, by Migration Intent

State	Migration Intent: Yes	Migration Intent: No	Chi-square Value	Probability Level
North Carolina	48.7 (1649)	23.1 (990)	171.91	.001
North Dakota	40.7 (622)	29.7 (413)	13.11	.001
Comparison, by migration intent, North Carolina and North Dakota, high educational expectation			16.33	.001

Table 11. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Source of Influence on Vocational and Educational Decisions, by Residence, In Percents

	Vocational Decision				Educational Decision			
	North Carolina		North Dakota		North Carolina		North Dakota	
Source	Country (752)	Town (945)	Country (295)	Town (506)	Country (829)	Town (1088)	Country (297)	Town (512)
Mother	25.7	28.2	21.0	15.0	44.6	46.7	26.3	26.9
Father	14.4	15.5	20.0	20.0	18.9	22.7	14.8	23.1
Sister	4.4	4.7	5.1	4.1	4.6	4.2	10.1	6.5
Brother	4.8	3.1	7.1	5.5	3.7	3.4	10.4	7.4
Relative	6.5	6.4	5.4	4.4	3.7	3.0	2.7	1.8
Friend	16.4	16.5	13.6	18.2	7.8	7.9	16.2	15.8
Teacher	19.3	16.4	14.2	16.8	13.2	8.7	9.4	7.8
Person	8.6	9.4	13.6	16.0	3.4	3.3	10.1	10.7

Table 12. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Mother's Attitude Toward Vocational and Educational Decisions, By Residence, In Percents

	Vocational Decision				Educational Decision			
	North Carolina		North Dakota		North Carolina		North Dakota	
Attitude	Country (1026)	Town (1232)	Country (332)	Town (559)	Country (987)	Town (1244)	Country (332)	Town (584)
Agrees	85.8	88.1	86.4	87.8	82.6	86.1	81.0	80.8
Accepts	12.6	9.7	11.5	10.4	13.2	10.1	14.5	13.4
Opposes	1.7	2.2	2.1	1.8	4.3	3.9	4.5	5.8

Table 13. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Father's Attitude Toward Vocational and Educational Decisions, by Residence, In Percents

	Vocational Decision				Educational Decision			
	North Carolina		North Dakota		North Carolina		North Dakota	
Attitude	Country (957)	Town (1103)	Country (320)	Town (518)	Country (927)	Town (1116)	Country (319)	Town (547)
Agrees	85.4	87.4	85.9	86.7	81.1	86.8	83.1	80.6
Accepts	11.7	9.3	11.3	10.4	13.2	9.4	13.5	13.7
Opposes	2.9	3.3	2.8	2.9	5.7	3.8	3.5	5.7

Table 14. North Carolina - North Dakota Comparisons, Influence of Prior Education or Vocational and Educational Decisions, by Residence, In Percent

	Vocational Decision				Educational Decision			
	North Carolina		North Dakota		North Carolina		North Dakota	
Influence	Country (1061)	Town (1288)	Country (349)	Town (595)	Country (1023)	Town (1290)	Country (351)	Town (619)
Great Deal	49.1	48.4	10.3	14.5	50.2	56.1	14.0	14.6
Some	30.2	30.2	32.1	29.2	25.1	23.3	33.3	33.3
Very Little	14.6	15.8	41.8	38.7	17.0	14.3	39.0	38.4
None	6.1	5.6	15.8	17.7	7.6	6.4	13.7	13.8